

14 July 2006 Ankara

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support Prof Chuck Kleinhans for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Teaching Award in my capacity as one of his former PhD students.

I was a graduate student at Northwestern University during the early eighties. Throughout my studies both as an undergraduate and graduate student I had the good fortune of meeting several excellent teachers, both at METU and NU. My encounter with Prof Kleinhans however was a unique experience which shaped my personality as well as my career. It is a privilege for me to revive some of these experiences in this letter.

During my four years as a graduate student at Northwestern University, Department of Television and Film, I was able to attend several courses of Professor Chuck Kleinhans. Each year he would open a new course and graduate students would simply rush to register. He was extremely popular and with several good reasons.

His lectures were not simply about dry academic facts and how to digest them. He would take you through the stream of cinema and venture into human tissue with its multidimensional aspects. He would not teach to read cinema; any professor would do that. He would teach how life transforms into cinema rather than reading into cinema the usual academic expressions which are signs of higher education. He would wake up those dormant adventurous child in you. Spark life into your soul and you would leave class not only with newly lit enthusiasm but also with solid ideas about how to start the rest of your life. And this would happen at every day he had class, over and over again.

Like all other professors he conveyed his knowledge to his students. At that point most other professors considered their job done but that was where Prof Kleinhans started to deviate widely from the others. His way of handling his knowledge with a conscious humane touch, taking his knowledge as a means of acquiring a wide perspective on life as opposed to using his knowledge to find fault with the erroneous life penetrated into us more than volumes of words we heard in ordinary classes.

There were many popular professors during our life as a student, from kinder garden to the end of that final defense day when they shake your hand and say "Congratulations doctor!" But we eventually outgrow them. We grow and leave even the legends we make out of them in our imaginations. Decades later we remember them mostly with warm feelings and dutiful respect. We realize that now we are a better person than most of them, thanks to all of them. My experience with Prof Kleinhans however stands aside from all of these ordinary experiences of student life. In times of trouble I ask in my mind to Prof Kleinhans what he would do. Of course he would first be patient. Then he would trust that knowledge will eventually light the way. And he would nonetheless leave margin for the imagination of life to create marvelous ways which we may in our infinite inexperience call suffering. But he would work his way through life with diligent effort, love for people and with an eagerness to learn.

Most people try to conduct their relations with others without paying attention to racial, cultural or sexual differences. Some of them succeed. But only at the example of Prof Kleinhans you would see how this can be achieved so effortlessly. He takes these differences as riches life offers and reflects that onto his students.

When I decided to continue my graduate studies towards a PhD degree, without a second thought I asked Prof Kleinhans if he would guide me through that period of life too as he did so marvelously in his classes. He accepted and that was the beginning of a new era of learning for me. But I want to share only one episode with you which is exemplary of his devotion to his commitment as a supervisor. On one icy Chicago day Prof Kleinhans slipped and hurt his back to the point that he could not sit for a few days. He would either lie down or stand up, both with pain. And it was that time during my studies when my dissertation needed a master's touch up. I remember him giving me an appointment at a cafe where we stood at the bar counter for hours while we went through my dissertation, word by word. It was a tremendous experience for me to share my fresh ideas with a professor whom I admired. It was the first time I felt I was about to be accepted into this tribe of PhD's. It was a joy for me. Only after my friends pointed out to me that I realized how Prof Kleinhans had stood up for hours for me in pain, not letting his problem interfere with my enthusiasm. Today when I am impatient or selfish, with coworkers or even with my own children, I remember how I was treated on that day by Prof Kleinhans. I put a warm and understanding smile on my face and say "what was that again?" Needless to say, then life smiles back at me and I know that all the credit should go to Prof Kleinhans who is probably at that moment spreading his contagious energy to some other young students.

I am married to an academician and we are living at the university campus. All our friends had PhD supervisors and most of them today are themselves supervisors. We exchange memories of our student days and I have a chance to observe, sometimes directly and sometimes through academic gossip, how others perform as supervisors. So I have a large space of samplings when I am comparing and evaluating Prof Kleinhans as a supervisor and lecturer. He was, and still continues to be, a world apart from the others. He wasn't simply an inspiration for us, as the old cliché goes. Most professors manage to be just that, with some wit. Prof Kleinhans showed us not only how to dream but also how to transform our dreams into reality and how to do it with love in our hearts.

I have been a professional documentary film maker for the last 20 years. I had a little over 100 episodes broadcasted on national television and some of them over and over again. Modesty will prevent me from considering myself successful in life but today I will resist that modesty and declare myself a success in documentary film world; that success and the dexterity in extracting happiness along the way is totally due to the warm and lasting influence of Prof Kleinhans. If I know one day that that I am shooting my last film, the very last frame I would put after the end credits, in bold face, will read "Thank you Chuck."

A teaching award for Prof Kleinhans would show his students, especially the new ones, that a good deed which never gets away without punishment is nevertheless eventually appreciated and deeply respected. I put forward my support for Prof Kleinhans without any reservation whatsoever.

Thank you

Sincerely

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